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Gemma Andrews  
Headteacher  
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Suffolk  
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Dear Mrs Andrews

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Castle Hill Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 11 May 2021 with Fyfe Johnston, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.**

The school should take further action to:

- ensure parents have confidence in how the school deals with any bullying.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have altered the structure of leadership in the school. There are now separate leaders of reading, writing and mathematics. Support staff have been appointed 'champions' for specific areas of the school improvement plan. A new leader of reading started in September 2020. Also, at this time, an experienced governor was also elected as chair of the local governing body.

In the past year, the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language has risen substantially.

## **Main findings**

Leaders and governors have not rested on their laurels during the pandemic. They have been resolute in their determination to improve the quality of education in the school. Improvement is evident in all areas identified as needing attention in the previous inspection report.

Leaders have improved the reading curriculum and how it is delivered. Through staff training and sharing best practice, staff are teaching reading with the same approach and expectations. This means that pupils know what to expect in their lessons. The focus on pupils sharing ideas and talking about vocabulary is helping pupils to understand the texts that they read. There is a focus on communication in lessons and this is helping pupils who are in the early stages of learning to speak English. Pupils now have access to high-quality texts, which they can take home to read or read together in class. Pupils say they are reading more often, and that reading is now fun.

Staff understand the importance of supporting pupils who are struggling to read. Early readers revisit their learning of sounds on a regular basis. In the autumn term, leaders ensured that Year 3 pupils revisited Year 2 phonics. Almost all pupils have caught up with their knowledge of sounds. Pupils are enjoying age appropriate books that match the sounds that they know.

Plans for the wider curriculum contain frequent opportunities for pupils to revisit important knowledge. This is helping pupils use prior knowledge to apply what they know. Pupils spoke confidently about the learning undertaken in the most recent national lockdown. The focus on subject specific vocabulary is making a difference. For example, Year 5 pupils spoke knowledgeably about their learning in geography. They used subject specific vocabulary to explain coastal erosion and its impact on headland.

Leaders have focused on making sure that teachers' knowledge of educational practice is improving. A new training website contains recorded videos and webinars so that staff can learn at a time suitable to them. Staff commented on how this

approach has improved their understanding of teaching methods and subject knowledge.

Governors continue to hold school leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. For example, they have sought parental opinion about online learning. Governors check the timeliness of actions outlined in the school's strategic development plan. They examine whether actions are having impact.

The school's strategic development plan focuses appropriately on the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, as well as other school priorities.

Many parents told us that 'home school provision has been amazing' and 'we cannot praise staff enough'. However, there were also a few mixed views about how leaders deal with bullying. A minority of parents who responded to Parent View, say that their child feels unsafe and that leaders do not deal with bullying quickly and effectively. Inspectors checked safeguarding procedures and found they remain effective. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and that they trust teachers to deal with bullying.

### **Additional support**

Trust leaders contributed towards a good pace of improvement during the pandemic. For example, trust leaders supported school leaders in their evaluation of the impact of improvement. This, as well as leadership training, has ensured leaders better understand what they need to do in their roles. Staff work in close collaboration with other schools in the trust and have access to subject networks.

Leaders appreciate the support of the external reading consultant. She has supported staff with the planning of the reading curriculum and its delivery.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) and the deputy CEO of the trust, and the chair of governors to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Inspectors also spoke with leaders of alternative provision, staff, parents, and pupils. Inspectors visited lessons, observed pupils read and scrutinised documentation. Inspectors considered the 39 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 28 free-text comments. They also reviewed 53 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the ASSET Education multi-

academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**